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ONE OF THOSE DAYS

"HAVE YOU EVER HAD ONE OF THOSE DAYS"

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FICTION

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One of those day

Have you ever had one of those days? The type of day where it ends and you think "how did I go from where I was this morning to now. For me, this was today. It all began with me waking up. It was the deepest sleep I have had in months. We had just come back off a 2-day patrol. We got back to the base camp about nine at night so the Sargent said we could all get our heads down for the evening. Apparently, we had another special patrol in the morning. A special patrol was a code the Sargent used for Ambush.

Climbing out of my stretcher, I was careful not to hit my head on the roof of the tent. It was covered in condensation. When bumped it created a two-second shower and everything got wet. Quickly dressing into my fatigues, I scurried over to get some breakfast from the galley. There was always one thing you could constantly count on in the army and that was the standard of food. It was always crap. After forcing down my meal of powdered egg and something which looked like bacon but wasn't, the Sargent briefed us and off we went.

We were to set up an ambush about six kilometres from our base camp. The enemy had been probing our line looking for weaknesses and our ambush was to make them rethink their strategies. Quite often in jungle warfare one of the best weapons to use on your enemy is surprise and confusion. Our last few ambushes had gone very well. A high body count on their side and only a small wound from shrapnel on ours.

We reached the ambush site and set up shop. It was at a small bend in a track which we knew the enemy used frequently. We had been expecting an attack on the base camp for a few weeks but nothing so far. This meant that we might hit the jackpot. If a few enemy platoons were moving in

towards our base camp for an attack, they would most likely walk straight into our trap.

With everything set, we waited. One hour, two hours, three hours and then bingo. We first heard them talking. Given that they were six kilometres from our base camp, the enemy must have assumed that talking would be fine, at least for a few more kilometres. They were wrong, or so I thought. As they approached, one holy shit storm of lead poured down on those bastards. They fell like flies. We had rigged the track well with trip-wired grenades and as they took cover, from one side of the track to the other, they set them off. I guess looking back now, it all makes sense but at the time, it looked like a victory and an awesomely executed ambush. We all could not have been more wrong.

In our platoon, most of the guys were my mates. We all came from different parts of the country yet we had all been placed, for one reason or another, into this platoon. There were a few new guys which I didn't know yet but they seemed ok, just green. The parts of the battle that followed involved some of my mates getting knocked and then as I was reloading, my whole world went black.

I woke up on the floor of a truck with a thumping headache. I had been blindfolded and my hands had been tied behind my back. We must have been flanked by the enemy. We thought their numbers were fewer but given my predicament, we must have set up the ambush not realised that a whole enemy division, behind the platoon we ambushed, were making their way through the jungle to our assault our base camp. We weren't expecting any anything like the number of the enemy that surrounded us. By them simply springing our trap, we had inevitably trapped ourselves. We must have been quickly overrun. It would seem however for me; this was now irrelevant.

After about what seemed like an hour, the truck stopped. I am not sure where I was but I knew I had been taken well behind enemy lines. I assumed this because the truck had not stopped at any checkpoint and this must have meant that there was no need for it to be stopped. I was indeed, up the proverbial creek.

They dragged me out of the truck and I was walked into a room inside a small building. Sat in an old wooden seat, my blindfold was removed. There were two enemy officers in the room. They looked at me and then

spoke in their language, which I didn't understand. Then one spoke to me in English. He told me that I was now a prisoner of his imperial army and that the best thing for me was to answer all his questions truthfully to avoid any unpleasantness. Over the next two hours, he worked out I would not comply. I was hit and beaten as they repeatedly asked me their questions. How many soldiers are at our base camp? What was my Name? Where was my home? How many officer were at the base camp? How far away are the reinforcements? The questions just kept coming and my reply made them even angrier, a reply of silence.

They dragged me into another room and laid me down on a bench. They placed a cloth over my head and then came the water. We had been told about water-boarding in basic training but that seemed a little removed from actually having it done to you for real. Again with the questions. This time I spoke. "Could I please have a little more scotch and a little less water thank you. Who trained your barman, he's really not very good"? This made them furious but the water-boarding stopped. The only problem for me was that the beatings started again. After another hour they stopped. They left me there in that room for a while. I was alone. I was bleeding, bruised, battered and hungry. I think they had broken my arm and I could only see out of one eye.

A while later I could hear footsteps walking towards the door. This time it was a junior officer and a soldier. I looked up at them and noticed they wouldn't look me in the eye like the other officers and enemy soldiers had done. I found this disturbing and unsettling. They stood me up, tied my hands behind my back and asked me if I wanted a blindfold, in really broken English. Declining their offer, they walked me out to the courtyard and then it hit me, I was being taken to my execution.

As they walked me over to a corner of the courtyard, I thought of the slumber I had awoken from earlier that morning. The smell of the galley food as I ate my breakfast. The sound of the cordite which was apparent during the ambush. The taste of blood in my mouth from the last several hours of beatings.

As I was knelt down in the corner of the courtyard, I could hear the unclasping of the officer's pistol holster and the actioning of his 8mm Nambu Pistol

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About the author

William Dirk Mayberry is an Australian writer and independent digital publisher based in West Java, Indonesia. Writing across fiction, memoir, essays, educational works, self-help, and reflective nonfiction, his work explores memory, resilience, observation, and everyday human experience through a direct and personal style. His interest in storytelling began during his service in the Royal Australian Navy and later developed into a growing catalogue of independently published digital works released under the Java Free Press imprint. His publications include memoirs such as The Longest Way Home, children's stories from the Bag Chip Bird series, practical educational titles from the 101 Self Help collection, and speculative fiction projects including the Crononaught Collection. Influenced by writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson, his work combines realism, introspection, and accessible storytelling across a range of genres and formats.

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